

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

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ACTION PM-05

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15
CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 DODE-00 MCE-00 ACDA-12
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R 101120Z APR 78
FM AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7659
AMEMBASSY LONDON
INFO AMEMBASSY DOHA
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY MANAMA
AMEMBASSY MUSCAT
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

C O N F I D E N T I A L ABU DHABI 1007

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MASS, PCAT, UK, TC
SUBJECT: SALE OF BRITISH SCORPION TANKS TO DUBAI

REF: ABU DHABI 286

1. BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED: BBC MORNING OF APRIL 10 BROADCAST
ANNOUNCEMENT THAT BRITISH LEYLAND HAD RECENTLY SOLD 170 SCORPION
TANKS WORTH 50 MILLION POUNDS STERLING (\$97.5 MILLION). AMONG
PURCHASERS NAMED WERE DUBAI, THAILAND, AND HONDURAS. TANKS
WILL BE ASSEMBLED IN BELGIUM FROM PARTS MANUFACTURED
AT LEYLAND'S COVENTRY PLANT. END UNCLASSIFIED.

2. BEGIN CONFIDENTIAL: WE HAVE CHECKED BBC STORY
WITH UK AMBASSADOR ROBERTS WHO INFORMED US THAT
SALES OF SCORPIONS TO DUBAI IS NOT NEW, THAT ORDER WAS
PLACED SOME TIME AGO BY DUABI-BASED CENTRAL MILITARY
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REGION OF THE UAE ARMED FORCES, AND THAT HE ASSUMES
ANNOUNCEMENT WAS CARRIED ON BBC BECAUSE DELIVERIES ARE
ABOUT TO BEGIN. ROBERTS (WHO HAD HIS MILATT COLONEL
BROMMAGE WITH HIM DURING OUR TELEPHONE CALL) ADDED THAT
SCORPION, UNLIKE FRENCH AMX 30 PURCHASED LAST YEAR BY
ABU DHABI'S WESTERN MILITARY REGION, IS LIGHT, MANEUVERABLE,
AND IDEAL FOR DESERT CONDCTIONS.

3. COMMENT: IT WILL BE INTERESTING TO SEE HOW DELIVERY OF THESE THANKS IS HANDLED IN VIEW OF FEBRUARY 1, 1978 PRESIDENTIAL DECREE ABOLISHING THE REGIONAL COMMANDS AND FORMALLY INCORPORATING ALL ORGANIZED MILITARY FORMATIONS INTO THE UAE ARMED FORCES UNDER COMMAND OF ABU DHABI'S SHAIKH SULTAN BIN ZAYID (REFTEL). WE ASSUME THAT TROOPS IN DUBAI (NOW KNOWN, AT LEAST IN ABU DHABI, AS FIRST BRIGADE OF UAE ARMED FORCES) WILL STILL GET THEIR SCORPIONS, PROBABLY ON BASIS OF SOME AGREEMENT AMONG EMIRATES THAT THOSE ITEMS ORDERED AND IN THE PIPELINE BEFORE FEBRUARY 1, 1978 WILL STILL BE FUNDED BY FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AND WILL BE DELIVERED TO SUCCESSOR UNITS OR FORMER REGIONAL COMMANDS.

4. ON ANOTHER LEVEL, BRITISH SALE OF TANKS TO DUBAI (AS DID FRENCH ARMOR SALE TO ABU DHABI EMIRI GUARD LAST YEAR) REPRESENTS STILL ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF OUR WESTERN ALLIES FLOGGING ARMS IN THE LOWER GULF WHILE USG CONTINUES TO FOLLOW (CORRECTLY, WE BELIEVE) POLICY OF RESTRAINT IN ARMS SALES TO THESE COUNTRIES. DURING PERIOD 1972-76, THERE USED TO BE PERIODIC MEETINGS (ONCE OR TWICE EACH YEAR) BETWEEN STATE AND FCO OFFICIALS ON GULF DEVELOPEMTNS, INCLUDING OUR REPO7IVE LOWER GULF ARMS SALES POLICIES AND KNOWN PROSPECTIVE ARMS SALES. BELIEVE THESE TALKS HAD SOME RESTRAINING EFFECT ON BRITISH SALES EFFORTS. IF THESE PERIODIC MEETINGS HAVE BEEN ABANDONED OR IF ARMS SALES
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MATTERS HAVE BEEN DROPPED FROM THEIR AGENDA, WE URGE THE DIALOGUE BE RESUMED. EVEN IF SUCH TALKS ARE UNSUCCESSFUL IN PERSUADING UK TO FOLLOW OUR OWN EXAMPLE OF RESTRAINT IN SALES TO LOWER GULF, WE AT LEAST WOULD BENEFIT FROM HAVING A CLEARER IDEA OF WHAT OUR FRIENDS ARE SELLING AND THE MILITARY (AS OPPOSED TO THE COMMERCIAL) RATIONALE, IF ANY, FOR SUCH SALES.

DICKMAN

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